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ABSTRACT

Research indicates that one critical factor in successful and continuous staff development is consistently strong leadership and support. Leaders need to provide clarity, establish time lines, and keep an end product in sight. Specific administrative tasks include obtaining board support for the inservice education program, securing the needed resources, and promoting the inservice education concept to staff. Drawing on recent studies, this paper summarizes the importance of the principal's support for staff development as an agent for school level change. Principals who understand and participate in staff development activities gain credibility and visibility with staff and parents alike. To be educational leaders, principals must understand teaching methods as well as subject matter taught. According to many studies, the principal serves as head of the school's staff development program, sanctioning teachers' activities by controlling internal resources and rewards and limiting or expanding teachers' access to outside resources. The principal also evaluates teachers' performance and sets norms of collegiality. A principal's attitudes can either make or break an inservice program. A positive school climate should be developed before staff development efforts are made, and improvement goals should be written collaboratively by teachers and principals. A supportive climate is largely influenced by the chief administrator's behavior. Included are 34 references. (MLH)

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PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Conran and Chase (1983) indicated that one critical factor in successful and continuous staff development programs is consistently strong leadership and support. Because a comprehensive, continuous staff development plan is considered ambitious, leaders should "provide clarity, establish time lines, and keep an end product in sight" (p. 25). Specific tasks of administrators include obtaining board support for the inservice education program, securing the needed resources, and promoting the concept of inservice education to the staff. Administrators should also remain "consulted, involved, and visible throughout the inservice program and between programs" (p. 25).

A principal's support is critical for school level change (Arends et al., 1980; Bishop, 1976; Korinek et al., 1985; Wood, Freeland, & Szabo, 1985). Principals may choose or encourage participants, as well as exercise plenary power to reinforce an inservice project (DuFour, 1986; Krupp, 1986). As a sometimes active participant in an inservice activity, a principal expresses a knowledge of and commitment to the inservice activity (Cooper, 1985). School-based staff development programs in which principals serve as "helpers and planners tend to be more successful in accomplishing in-service objectives" (Chadwick, 1983, p. 12).

Principals who understand and participate in staff development activities gain credibility with the staff and

parents alike (Dillon, 1978). To be educational leaders, principals need to understand not only the subject matter taught in their schools but also the teaching methods. The principal is the "key to quality. The individual school is the prime seedbed for the germination of programs and activities" necessary for the professional growth of teachers (Edmonds, Ogletree, & Wear, 1966, p. 69). School administrators should provide the supportive guidance to school staffs (Griffin, 1982; Howey, 1980; Krupp, 1986). The greater the degree of reciprocity evident in teachers' and principals' interactions, the greater the support for successful inservice projects (Little, 1981).

The principal serves as head of the staff development program for the school (DuFour, 1986; Merenbloom 1984; Rappa, 1983). Working within the framework of the district, principals sanction teachers' activities by controlling powerful resources (Fenstermacher & Berliner, 1983; Harris, 1980; Little, 1981). They control the distribution of certain internal resources and rewards. They limit or expand teachers' access to outside resources by their decisions regarding special provisions, consultants, and teacher schedules. They also, formally and informally, evaluate teachers' performances within the classroom (Menacker et al., 1986; Rubin, 1978) with identification of inservice needs as a by-product of the process (Prasch, 1976). Principals are in a unique position to establish and maintain the important "norms of collegiality and

experimentation, and promote and foster the critical practices of staff development" (p. 26). The primary determinants of whether staff development programs maintain direction and/or purposefully alter direction are the way the staff development activity is embedded in the authority structure and reward structure of the school system (Schlechty, 1983).

A school principal strongly committed to staff development can pull together staff time and resources to promote inservice activities (Evertson, 1986; Krupp, 1986; Moore, 1980; Wood et al., 1981). To establish proper staff relations for professional growth on the part of the staff, democratic leadership is important because growth of a professional staff is greater when democratic principles are understood and used (Kierstead, 1985; Miller & Verduin, 1979). The morale of the professional staff is a critical factor in establishing a positive climate for significant staff development activities. The total condition of the school is the principal's responsibility (New York State Department of Education, 1981). The principal can insure that a school planning team considers the total educational program of the school, can incorporate the inservice planning team as an integral part of the school's organizational structure, and can provide input for a monitoring system that addresses the effectiveness of the inservice education program (Bouley, 1986; New York State Department of Education, 1981).

Without a display of administrative support for staff development programs, the staff may quickly "get the message that inservice training is not important" (Pelton, 1983, p. 14). The attendance of principals in staff development activities imparts their personal commitment as well as their view that the inservice activity is a total school effort (McLaughlin & Marsh, 1979). The attendance of principals at inservice activities also helps to support the staff development program and works against resentment of the program "as something done to teachers" (p. 85).

Wood (1982) stated that a positive school climate should be developed before staff development efforts are attempted, and goals for staff improvement should be written collaboratively by teachers and principals. The responsibility for the maintenance of new school practices should be shared by both teachers and principals (p. 57). A collegial relationship should be developed by teachers and administrators when implementing inservice activities and the application of new skills within the classroom (Bouley, 1986; Hutson, 1979; Kilgore, 1984). Principals should develop effective communication patterns with their faculty and create a "more positive school climate in which teachers and administrators can work cooperatively in planning, implementing, and evaluating continuous in-service programs" (Bell & Peightel, 1976, p. 9). A supportive climate for staff development is largely influenced by a principal's behavior (Griffin, 1982).

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